

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, NI

SUBJECT: LABOR UNREST: PROGRESS REPORT

REF: LAGOS 879

SUMMARY: DISSATISFACTION OVER UDOJI REPORT AND FMG WHITE PAPER CONTINUES TO MOUNT, BUT PROSPECTS APPEAR SLIGHTLY BRIGHTER THAN LAST WEEK IN WAKE NUMBER OF SETTLEMENTS AND EVIDENT FMG DETERMINATION TAKE STRONGER LINE (REFTEL) TO QUELL SPREADING UNREST. END SUMMARY.

1. SIGNS OF LABOR UNREST AND GENERAL DISSATISFACTION STEMMING FROM UDOJI REPORT AND FMG WHITE PAPER CONTINUED TO APPEAR IN LAST FEW DAYS AS MORE UNIONS AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS JOINED RISING CHORUS OF COMPLAINTS. ALMOST LOST IN TURMOIL OF LAST WEEKS WATER AND ELECTRICAL STRIKES WAS DISPUTE WHICH SHUT DOWN NATION'S RAILWAYS. THOUGH RAILWAY MANAGEMENT AGREED (AGAIN) TO PAY WAGE INCREASE DATING BACK TO 1969 BEFORE PAYING NEW UDOJI WAGE LEVELS, PORTION OF RAIL UNIONS LED BY OLD-TIME LABOR LEADER MICHAEL IMODU CONTINUED TO STRIKE UNTIL LATE JANUARY 28. IMODU HAS BEEN CHALLENGING LEADERSHIP OF NIGERIAN UNION OF RAILWAYMEN (NUR)

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AND USED EMOTIONAL PITCH OF UDOJI ISSUE IN THIS BATTLE.

POLICE JANUARY 25 USED TEAR GAS TO DISPERSE ESTIMATED 1,000
OF IMODU'S SUPPORTERS.

2. LIST OF UNIONS, TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS COMPLAINING
ON RE-GRADING EXERCISE INCLUDES TEACHERS (IN WESTERN STATE),
ENGINEERS, STENOGRAPHERS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKERS, NURSES,
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND A HOST OF OTHERS, INCLUDING NIGHTSOIL
COLLECTORS IN UMUAHIA. ULTIMATA LITTER THE PAPERS. NIGERIAN
LABOUR CONGRESS (NLC), AFTER WEEKEND MEETING, GAVE EMPLOYERS
IN PRIVATE SECTOR UNTIL FEBRUARY 17 TO PAY UDOJI-LEVEL WAGES,
WITH APPROPRIATE ARREARS. NLC NOW SEES 720 NAIRA PER YEAR AS
ABSOLUTE MINIMUM AND DEMANDS AT LEAST 30 PERCENT INCREASE FOR
ALL OTHER GRADES. FAILURE TO PAY THESE AMOUNTS WOULD, NCL
WARNS, RESULT IN JOINT INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY PRIVATE AND PUBLIC
SECTORS.

3. ORGANIZATION COVERING INDIGENOUS CONTRACTORS HAS APPEALED
TO FMG FOR HELP IN PAYING UDOJI AWARD, CLAIMING 30,000
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS MAY BE RETRENCHED IF AID FAILS TO MATERIALIZE.
CONTRACTOR GROUP CONTENTS FMG AT ONE TIME PLEDGED HELP, BUT
THERE NO INDICATION THUS FAR THAT FMG RECOGNIZES ANY SUCH
OBLIGATION.
MEANWHILE NUMBER OF CONSTRUCTION JOBS IN LAGOS HAVE HALTED.

4. AMONG ALL THESE THREATS AND ULTIMATA, A FEW RAYS OF HOPE
FOR INDUSTRIAL HARMONY HAVE EMERGED. NIGERIAN UNION OF BANKS,
INSURANCE AND ALLIED WORKERS (NUBIAW) REACHED TENTATIVE
AGREEMENT WHICH WILL GIVE JUNIOR WORKERS NEW WAGE SCALES
COMPARABLE TO UDOJI LEVELS, THOUGH SALARY REVIEW FOR SENIOR
STAFF AND SUPERVISORS REMAINS TO BE COMPLETED. PHILIP MORRIS
COMPANY IN ILORIN (REFTEL ALSO REACHED AGREEMENT, WITH UNION
SETTLING FOR ONLY TWO MONTH'S ARREARS ACCOMPANIED BY WAGE
INCREASES RANGING FROM 40 PERCENT TO 148 PERCENT. OIL
COMPANIES ALSO REPORTEDLY NEARING COMPLETION OF NEGOTIATIONS.

5. DESPITE EARLIER REPORTS THAT SETTLEMENT WAS NEAR, ONE OF
NATIONS'S LARGEST COMMERCIAL FIRMS, UNITED AFRICAN COMPANY, WAS
HIT BY WORK-TO-UDJOI LATE JANUARY 28 AFTER BREAKDOWN IN
NEGOTIATIONS. REPORTS MORNING JANUARY 29 INDICATE POLICE HAVE
BEEN USED TO CLEAR WORKERS FROM COMPANY PREMISES, A MOVE WHICH
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COULD MAKE FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS MORE DIFFICULT. OTHER PRIVATE
SECTOR COMPANIES ALSO BEING THREATENED OR AFFECTED BY INDUSTRIAL
DISPUTES.

6. MEANWHILE, POLICE HAVE DETAINED THREE MORE UNION LEADERS
JANUARY 28, TWO FROM UNION INVOLVED IN LAGOS WATER STOPPAGE
AND PRESIDENT OF NUNBE WHO THREATENED FURTHER INDUSTRIAL
ACTION IN PROTEST OVER ARREST OF HIS UNION'S GENERAL SECRETARY

(REFTEL). THIS BRINGS TOTAL OF DETAINED UNION LEADERS TO SEVEN, WITH GOOD POSSIBILITY MORE MAY FOLLOW. SOME BANKS HAVE APPARENTLY FAILED TO OPEN MORNING JANUARY 29 AS NUNBE SUPPORTERS PROTEST DETENTION OF THEIR LEADERS.

7. COMMENT: REFTTEL COVERS NEW HARDER LINE APPARENTLY BEING ADOPTED BY FMG TO CURB PRESENT FLOOD TIDE OF UNREST. SETTLEMENTS BEING ANNOUNCED IN PRESS MAY ENCOURAGE OTHER UNIONS TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN RISK ACTIVITIES WHICH NOW SEEM LIKELY TO LAND THEM IN JAIL. ON NEGATIVE SIDE, HOWEVER, PRESENT AGREEMENTS WHICH COVER EMPLOYERS MOST ABLE TO MEET UDOJI SCALES MAY BE SETTING TOO HIGH A TARGET FOR OTHER UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS TO MEET. WE DO NOT BELIEVE NATION HAS RESOLVED INDUSTRIAL UNREST, WITH REAL CRUNCH LIKELY TO COME IN MID-FEBRUARY WHEN NLC ULTIMATUM EXPIRES, BUT CONTITIONS APPEAR SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN LAST WEEK.
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